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978-1-107-04621-4 - An Everyday Life of the English Working Class: Work, Self and Sociability in the Early Nineteenth Century

Carolyn Steedman

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An Everyday Life of the English Working Class

This book concerns two men, a stockingmaker and a magistrate, who both lived in a small English village at the turn of the nineteenth century. It focuses on Joseph Woolley the stockingmaker, on his way of seeing and writing the world around him, and on the activities of magistrate Sir Gervase Clifton, administering justice from his country house Clifton Hall. Using Woolley's voluminous diaries and Clifton's magistrate records, Carolyn Steedman gives us a unique and fascinating account of working-class living and loving, and getting and spending. Through Woolley and his thoughts on reading and drinking, sex, the law, and social relations, she challenges traditional accounts which she argues have overstated the importance of work to the working man's understanding of himself, as a creature of time, place, and society. She shows instead that, for men like Woolley, law and fiction were just as critical as work in framing everyday life.

CAROLYN STEEDMAN is a Professor in the Department of History at the University of Warwick. Her recent publications include *Master and Servant: Love and Labour in the English Industrial Age* (2007) and *Labours Lost: Domestic Service and the Making of Modern England* (2009).

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In memory of my father
Ellis Kay Pilling
1904–1977

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Though we have properly enough entitled this our work, a history, and not a life; nor an apology for a life, as is more in fashion; yet we intend in it rather to pursue the method of those writers, who profess to disclose the revolutions of countries, than to imitate the painful and voluminous historian, who, to preserve the regularity of his series, thinks himself obliged to fill up as much paper with the detail of months and years in which nothing much remarkable happened, as he employs upon those notable æras when the greatest scenes have been transacted on the human stage ... it is our purpose in the ensuing pages to pursue ... [this] method. When any extraordinary scene presents itself, (as we trust will often be the case) we shall spare no pains nor paper to open it at large ... but if whole years should pass without producing anything worthy of notice, we shall not be afraid of a chasm in our history; but shall hasten on to matters of consequence, and leave such periods of time totally unobserved.

The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling. By Henry Fielding, Esq. In Three Volumes, T. Longman, B. Law & Son and 14 others, London 1792, Volume I, Book II, Chapter 1, Shewing what Kind of History this is; what it is like, and what it is not like.

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A note on texts and transcription

There is discussion of Joseph Woolley's and Sir Gervase Clifton's notebooks throughout. The fullest account of Woolley's is in Chapter 11. All quotations from their writing retain original spelling, punctuation, and capitalisation. I have not preserved original line endings. Ellipses indicate my omissions; square brackets enclose my additions, which are restricted to an occasional correctly spelled word or date, and [?] to indicate uncertainty about the texts. I have, however, imposed uniformity on the monetary values recorded by both. So when Woolley wrote 'hair cutting 1 0', I have always used '1s 0d'. I have attempted clarity with a magistrate, a clergyman, and a village all called 'Clifton'.

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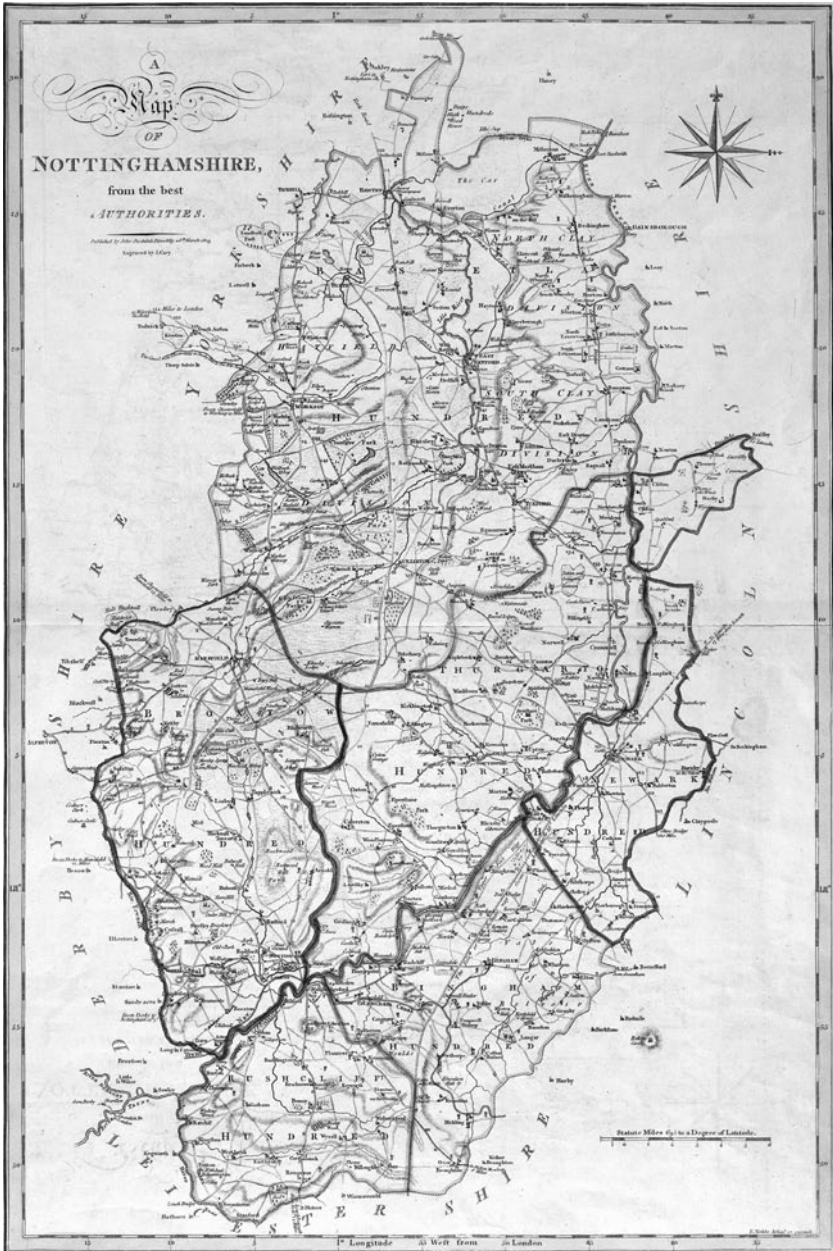
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